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SUBJECT: S/I SATTERFIELD BRIEFS SPANISH MFA ON IRAQ
DEVELOPMENTS

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Classified By: DCM Arnold Chacon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY. September 11, S/I Ambassador Satterfield briefed Deputy Foreign Minister Lossada on developments in Iraq. He urged the Spanish to reinforce our call for increased regional support for Iraq and to encourage those countries that have already sent diplomatic representation and/or participated in high-level visits. With respect to Syria, Bashar al-Assad should be challenged to engage in a positive manner with regard to Abu Ghadiyah and other foreign fighter facilitator networks. Lossada agreed regarding the danger posed by foreign fighters and noted Spanish action to crack down on terrorist cells. Asked about the possibility of a visit by FM Moratinos to Iraq, Lossada said that the government position on Iraq since its decision to withdraw troops in 2004 was "maturing" and that a visit might be possible in the new year. Presented with opportunities for enhanced support in national police training and rule-of-law, Lossada hedged any commitment for direct Spanish involvement and given the political climate in Spain, it would be very difficult to "sell" the public on the idea of putting either Spanish police or civil servants in Iraq. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) September 11, S/I Ambassador Satterfield briefed Deputy Foreign Minister Lossada on developments in Iraq. With a view to FM Moratinos' Middle East swing to Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria during September 12-17, Satterfield urged the Spanish to reinforce our call for increased regional support for Iraq and to encourage those countries that have already sent diplomatic representation and/or participated in high-level visits. Iraq's neighbors had been inactive for too long and their engagement was needed to stabilize the region. Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians should hear the international community's appreciation for their increased contact with Iraq. Lossada said he would factor those points into their agenda and explained that the Moratinos trip would further Spain's interest in promoting Middle East peace and also launch Spain's bid to have Barcelona named as the headquarters of the new Union of the Mediterranean.

¶3. (S) Satterfield described the significant positive changes taking place in Iraq, notably on security, increasing regional engagement with Baghdad, and the ongoing U.S.-Iraq discussions on a post-UNSCR security arrangement and long-term strategic relationship that took account of enhanced Iraqi sense of national capacity, decision-making and sovereignty. While Iraq is not violence free and al-Qaida - while significantly battered and constrained - continued to

be present, the margin to foment violence is reduced. Given FM Moratinos' emphasis on his "good relationship with the Syrians," Satterfield noted that Spain could help promote constructive relations between Damascus and Baghdad. The U.S. wants to see constructive political, economic and security ties between Iraq and Syria that will promote regional stability. However, Satterfield underscored, Syria has made no meaningful steps on security in general and with regard to foreign fighters in particular. With specific respect to the Abu Ghadiyah network of foreign fighters, Syria was exploiting the network for its own purposes without curbing the flow of suicide bombers into Iraq - and without regard to broader regional security concerns. Satterfield emphasized that Syria could not claim any credit for current reduction in violence in Iraq, but that Bashar al-Assad should be challenged to engage in a positive manner with regard to Abu Ghadiyah and other foreign fighter facilitator networks. Lossada, who managed the counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and disarmament MFA portfolio until April 2008, asked for more information about foreign fighter flows.

Satterfield said that foreign fighter numbers were down because Iraq had become a much more difficult and hostile environment for them, particularly as Iraqi forces, with Coalition support, gained the upper hand in more and more of the country. As a consequence, there needed to be increasing attention given to denying sanctuary for foreign fighters leaving Iraq - and to those now present and accumulating in Syria. Lossada agreed regarding the danger posed and noted Spanish action to crack down on terrorist cells.

¶4. (C) As UNSC Resolution 1790 expires on December 31 and would be - hopefully - replaced by bilateral arrangements, Satterfield said that Spain would be uniquely qualified to work under the NATO Training Mission (NTM-I) to provide national police training from the Guardia Civil and/or

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provide critically needed rule-of-law programs in Iraq. He cited the success of the Italian Carabinieri cooperation and emphasized that the training programs should be held in Iraq; it was no longer necessary or appropriate to conduct assistance programs outside Iraq. Asked by Lossada about the effectiveness of UN efforts, Satterfield reviewed and praised Staffan di Mistura's work to resolve disputed internal boundaries (Article 140) and support provincial elections. Lossada agreed that the situation was evolving and that Spain would consider how to contribute to Iraq's stabilization by reviewing all the options carefully. Asked about the possibility of a visit by FM Moratinos to Iraq, Lossada said that the government position on Iraq since its decision to withdraw troops in 2004 was "maturing" and that a visit might be possible in the new year. Lossada's staff asked to be kept informed of the dates for a Neighbor's Ministerial Conference in Baghdad (possibly in early November) so they could factor that event into their planning.

¶5. (U) Spain reports 100% disbursement of its Iraq Donors Conference pledge made in Madrid during 2003, with the qualifying proviso that some concessional loans are not yet finalized due to Iraqi capacity issues and specific project proposals are pending. In addition, Spain contributes to Iraq through the EUJUST LEX program for capacity building. In 2007, the GOS trained 160 judicial, police and penal system officials in human rights and civil society development in Spain. Apart from its Madrid Conference pledge, Spain contributed more than 800,000 euros for displaced persons relief in Jordan and Syria.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Lossada was very appreciative of the Iraq briefing and expressed particular interest in the security aspects, especially the prospect that foreign fighters might boomerang to North Africa or Spain. He was clearly hedging any commitment for direct Spanish support for Iraq and given the political climate in Spain, it would be very difficult to "sell" the public on the idea of putting either Spanish police or civil servants in Iraq. The PSOE-led socialist government must take care not to undermine its withdrawal

position that was based on an argument that the UN authorities were not legal grounds for invading Iraq. With the end of the MNF-I and increased Iraqi sovereignty and independence over time, there might be more possibilities to encourage a renewed Spanish presence. In the meantime, ensuring that Spain receives credit for its efforts with KFOR, Afghanistan and Lebanon would provide the positive encouragement needed to keep them productively engaged. Lossada said that he looked forward to seeing NEA Assistant Secretary Welch at UNGA to discuss the peace process and other matters of regional interest. END COMMENT.

Aguirre